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The Washington Merry-Go-Round

# Fulbright Advice Ignored by JFK

By Drew Pearson

During the first few days of the Kennedy Administration Sen. William Fulbright (D-Ark.), now in the headlines over foreign affairs advice to the Johnson Administration, gave some less headlined, private advice to the Kennedy Administration. He advised the new President that then was the time—the winter of 1961—to run with the ball on Berlin.



Pearson

Fulbright pointed out that Premier Khrushchev obviously was in a friendly frame of mind toward Mr. Kennedy, had offered to send a special ambassador to his inauguration, had released the American RB-47 fliers, had sent a glowing letter of congratulations to JFK, was giving various indications that he wanted to get along with the new regime.

Fulbright pointed out that since Berlin had been ranking relations between the United States and Russia for over a decade, and since Berlin was bound to come up anyway, it was best for Mr. Kennedy to grab the ball and run with it.

The new President got similar advice from Adlai Stevenson, Averell Harriman,

former Ambassador to Moscow, and Chester Bowles, then Under Secretary of State. But, busy with a new Congress, and faced with negative advice from part of his State Department, Mr. Kennedy delayed.

That delay may have been one of his most serious foreign policy errors. For with the delay came the Bay of Pigs disaster when American prestige fell to its lowest ebb. It was only after this that Mr. Kennedy met with Khrushchev in Vienna—a Khrushchev who was irritated over being snubbed, and who obviously felt he had the whip hand as a result of the Bay of Pigs. The meeting was a disaster.

## Near War With U.S.S.R.

There followed more disastrous events, including the Berlin Wall, the maneuvering of U.S. and U.S.S.R. tanks on both sides of Berlin, together with the showdown over Cuban missiles that brought the two most powerful nations in the world closer to war than at any other time in history.

It has taken two years of patient, careful diplomacy since then, including the test ban treaty, to ease the two countries back into a position of better understanding. Much of this might have been avoided if the Kennedy Administration had followed Fulbright's advice.

Came the advent of the Johnson Administration on

Nov. 22, 1963. Immediately Khrushchev sent his No. 2 man, Anastas Mikoyan, to Washington for the funeral. Long lines of Russians filed through the American Embassy in Moscow to pay tribute to the dead President. There were outpourings of genuine grief all over the Communist world—except in China—and it looked as if the tragedy of Dallas might have forged a link of sympathy between the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R.

A few days after Mr. Kennedy's death, President Johnson received from the Soviet its confidential file on accused assassin Lee Oswald, who had lived in Russia. Mr. Johnson sat down and wrote Khrushchev a letter of thanks. Thereupon Secretary of State Dean Rusk advised him not to send the letter.

Mr. Johnson argued that the United States had never turned over a confidential file to a foreign government as did the Russians in this case, and felt that the United States should acknowledge this Soviet gesture. He insisted on sending the letter. But before it was finally sent, the State Department took out all of the warmth and cordiality.

## Castro Woos U.S.A.

At about this time, the Russians began dropping hints that the United States should patch things up with Fidel Castro, that the Soviet didn't want to continue there indefi-

nitely, that it was much better for two old friends—Cuba and the United States—to make up.

This may sound like an amazing overture from a government supposed to be engaged in a cold war with the United States; but it was true. Furthermore, Sen. Fulbright had known about these overtures, and this is one reason he made his dramatic speech last week urging the United States to forget the boycott and make peace with Castro.

What Fulbright also knew was that Fidel Castro himself, while visiting Moscow last May 1, made a surprising speech that Cuba wanted to resume relations with the United States.

Simultaneously Russia has continued pulling its troops out of Cuba until only those manning the surface-to-air missiles are left. Simultaneously, when the United States was criticized all over Latin America for the Panamanian riots, Moscow newspapers buried the story. There were no critical editorials accusing the United States of bloody imperialism.

These are some things the American public hasn't entirely known about which Sen. Fulbright knows in detail and which were behind his historic speech urging the Johnson Administration to scrap the boycott and patch up relations with Cuba.

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